

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 02043 261330Z

41

ACTION NEA-10

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AGR-05 /062 W

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O 261212Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5791

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 2043

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: CENTO, IR

SUBJ: CENTO ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MEETING: IRANIAN MOVE TO

BLOCK EARLY APPOINTMENT OF U.S. AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR

REF: (A) STATE 045775, (B) ANKARA 1458

1. EMBOFF CALLED ON DR. AHMAD TAVAKOLI, HEAD, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DEPARTMENT (CENTO), MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FEBRUARY 26 AND DISCUSSED THOROUGHLY CONCERNS CONVEYED IN REFTEL (A). TAVAKOLI SAID THAT IDENTICAL ISSUES WERE COVERED WITH CENTO'S DEPUTY SEC GEN CRAWFORD FEBRUARY 25 AND CRAWFORD INDICATED HE WOULD CALL AT DEPARTMENT PRIOR TO ECONOMIC MEETING. FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES TAVAKOLI CANDID RESPONSES:

2. GOI REPRESENTATIVE RAZI CARRIED OUT GOI INSTRUCTIONS AT FEB 9-11 ECONOMIC MEETING. GOI SEPARATES ISSUES OF RESOLUTION A AND PROPOSED DONATION BY USG OF AN AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR. GOI BELIEVES RESOLUTION A HAS OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS IF INDEED IT EVER FULFILLED ITS INTENDED PURPOSE, SINCE NO ECONOMIC PROJECTS BENEFICIAL TO ALL THREE COUNTRIES HAVE YET EMERGED. THE NTCF IS THE PROPER VEHICLE FOR ACTIONS NOW REFERRED UNDER RESOLUTION A. GOI WILL TRY TO "SHELF" RESOLUTION A AT NEXT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 02043 261330Z

MEETING. IRAN CONTINUES TO WELCOME THE DONATION BY USG OF AN

AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR ON A TEMPORARY BASIS (NOT CONCERNED IF ONE OR TWO YEARS). SINCE NO "CAPITAL PROJECT" IS IN HAND, GOI SEES ROLE OF THE ADVISOR AS TEMPORARY UNTIL SOMETHING OF SUBSTANCE EVOLVES AND THEN IT CAN BE DETERMINED (THROUGH PROPER PROCEDURES) WHETHER A PERMANENT POSITION IS JUSTIFIED AND WHERE IT SHOULD BE LOCATED. TAVAKOLI SAID THAT PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR COULD BE ASSIGNED AS ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARIAT AND COULD ENJOY FULL PRIVILEGES, ETC. HE SAID SECRETARIAT IS NOW ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED AND STAFFED TO PROVIDE NECESSARY SUPPORT SERVICES. SUCH ASSIGNMENT COULD BE APPROVED BY THE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE AT THE WASHINGTON MEETING. (TAVAKOLI KNEW NOTHING OF RAZI'S PROPOSING THAT ADVISOR BE ATTACHED TO USAID ANKARA AND APPRECIATED WHY THAT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE.) AS SIDE NOTE, DR. TAVAKOLI IS AWAITING INTERNAL MFA RESPONSE TO HIS RECOMMENDATION THAT HE ATTEND THE WASHINGTON MARCH 16-18 MEETING.

3. SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR: TAVAKOLI SAID HE ASSURED AN OFFICIAL OF HMG MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ON FEBRUARY 25 THAT IRAN WILL GRANT THE SAME PRIVILEGES TO DR. AMES' REPLACEMENT IN TEHRAN AS AMES ENJOYS.

4. CENTO ASSISTANCE TO TURKISH EARTHQUAKE RELIEF: TAVAKOLI SAID THIS WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE CENTO ACTION, RELATING IN NO WAY TO CENTO'S MISSION.

5. GOI POLICY ON CENTO: TAVAKOLI SAID GOI IS WAITING TO SEE FROM HMG AND USG WHAT IS DESIRED OF CENTO. IF IT IS TO BE A SERIOUS DEFENSE ORGANIZATION THEN SUCH MUST BE REFLECTED IN USG AND HMG POLICIES AND ACTIONS. IF SUCH BE THE CASE, THEN CENTO, FOR PURPOSES OF PUBLIC POSTURE, ESPECIALLY TO MINIMIZE SOVIET CONCERNS, SHOULD COUCH ITSELF IN ACTIVE, REALISTIC ECONOMIC, HEALTH, EDUCATION, ETC. PROGRAMS. SINCE THE DEFENSE PREMISE IS UNCLEAR, IT IS FRUSTRATING BUT UNDERSTANDABLE THAT USG AND HMG DO NOT TAKE NON-DEFENSE ACTIVITIES MORE SERIOUSLY. MEANWHILE CENTO HAS ATROPHIED IN MISSION BUT NOT IN STAFF AND PAPER PRODUCTION. THEREFORE GOI IS INSISTENT THAT UNTIL AFOREMENTIONED BASIC ISSUES ARE CLARIFIED NOTHING NEW OF A PERMANENT NATURE WILL OCCUR UNTIL THE REORGANIZATION COMMITTEE HAS COMPLETED ITS WORK (TAVAKOLI SAID CRAWFORD ADMITTED THAT SEVERAL ECONOMIC POSITIONS COULD BE ABOLISHED NOW WITHOUT ANY ADVERSE EFFECT ON OUTPUT. THIS IS SO, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEHRAN 02043 261330Z

TAVAKOLI SAID, BECAUSE THERE IS NO PROJECT ACTIVITY TO KEEP THE STAFF OCCUPIED. THUS MORALE IS LOW QUITE APART FROM QUESTION OF SALARIES.)

6. GOI'S VIEW OF CENTO'S FUTURE, AT LEAST INsofar AS REFLECTED BY TAVAKOLI, IS THAT IT WILL RECEIVE GOI SUPPORT COMMENSURATE WITH THE ACTIONS (NOT REQUESTS) TAKEN BY ITS PARTNERS. TO QUOTE, "CENTO IS A PARTNERSHIP, AND WHILE WE WOULD NOT INSIST ON

EQUAL SHARING OF BURDEN, WE EXPECT MORE PARTICIPATION FROM ALL MEMBERS (READ PAKISTAN AND TURKEY) THAN THEY EVIDENCE." TAVAKOLI ADMITTED THAT THIS ATTITUDE HAS HARDENED WITH IRAN'S RECENT FISCAL REALITIES (I.E., DEFICIT BUDGETS). HE IS OF COURSE AWARE THAT NEITHER USG NOR HMG TAKES AN EXPANSIVE ATTITUDE TO CENTO'S PROGRAMS, BUT GIVEN THAT, HE BELIEVES THAT USG CRITERIA FOR CENTO PROJECTS, IDENTIFIED AS CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE, ARE UNREALISTIC. (E.G., "WHAT DOES IRAN HAVE IN COMMON WITH PAKISTAN IN POPULATION POLICY?"). HE SAID IRAN HAS NOT RECEIVED RESPONSES TO THE ECONOMIC PROJECTS IT PROPOSED UNDER "NEW ECONOMIC INITIATIVES," AND SUGGESTED ONE REASON IS USG CRITERIA.

7. COMMENT: EMBASSY, WITH AD HOC INVOLVEMENT IN CENTO MATTERS, WOULD NOT PRETEND TO KNOW ALL NUANCES OF PRESENT DILEMMA. TAVAKOLI'S COMMENTS AND GOI POSITION IN FEB 9-11 MEETING REFLECT MORE THAN NEW GOI FISCAL REALITIES AND RESULTANT TENDENCY TO AVOID NEW FOREIGN COMMITMENTS AND CONTAIN THE OLD. REFTEL B, RECEIVED AFTER MEETING WITH TAVAKOLI, POINTS TO POSSIBILITY GOI MAY BE TILTING FROM CENTO TO RCD. EXCLUDING CENTO'S DEFENSE MISSION, THE CHOICE WOULD BE SEEN BY MANY IRANIANS AS BETWEEN TWO NON-STARTERS. BUT WITH RCD'S HEADQUARTERS IN IRAN AND IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH USG AND HMG WELL COVERED ON BILATERAL BASIS, LOGICAL TILT WOULD BE TO RCD. BUT THE BASIC ATTRACTION OF BILATERALISM, SEEN IN GOI'S MAIN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND TRADE BILATERALS, IS PREVAILING CHOICE OF OPTIONS.

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